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This technology does it all at home, but you'll still have to cut the grass

By Amy Sessler
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

DUXBURY — As a builder, Frank Ronne knows that homes can be built to provide a lot more than shelter.

With the right technology, homes can be automated to turn off lights, turn on lights, set the thermostat, turn on the alarm, and perform a range of automated steps with the flip of a single switch.

The problem, as Ronne saw it, was that his customers didn't know.

So Ronne, owner of SEA-FAR Development Corp. in Duxbury, built a model home to show off these features. Then, he and his wife, Susan, did exactly what Ronne wanted his customers to do.

"We fell in love with it," Ronne said.

Not minding visits from serious customers, the Ronnes moved into the model and they are even more convinced that an automated home adds to their quality of life.

"We don't touch the lights in my house on a normal night like this. The kitchen comes on an hour before sunset and as it gets darker, different lights go on inside and the exterior lighting starts to go on, creating an ambience. Then, around 11 p.m., they all go back down to 40 percent or shut off," said Frank Ronne.

Because the house was built both to dazzle and to showcase home automation technology, the Ronnes have a television in every room, including the bathrooms for a total of 13 televisions. But the televisions are not just for watching soaps. From any room, the

Ronnes can use built-in television screens to see who is coming up the walk or pulling into the driveway.

The house is also automated for music, that can be piped into any room's built-in speakers, for heating and cooling, for drapery to open and close and for security. Heating includes a special floor heat that automatically goes on based on the outside temperature.

"Wherever you go, your feet are always warm and we don't wear any shoes," said Ronne.

The multi-zone alarm system not only checks for water and gas leaks, but can provide limited access to the house for the nanny who takes care of the couple's two Tibetan terriers. Ronne can check to see if someone, the pet nanny or any repair person with an authorized code, has been to the house, when the visit occurred, and which rooms were occupied.

While the house has lots of features to keep the Ronnes from having to fiddle with heat and lights, it doesn't mean they stay on the couch all the time. Even with automation, a human has to change the compact discs, cook

dinner, fill the tub with water, and do many of the usual tasks of daily living.

With automation, Ronne warns against automating things that don't really add to the quality of life.

For example, the coffee maker can be set along with all the other early morning functions, but Ronne said he makes lousy coffee and no technology can improve on that.

Instead he and his wife have another solution.

"We just go out and buy it each morning," he said.

**'We don't touch
the lights in my
house on a
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FRANK RONNE
Duxbury builder

Calling home to turn on the lights



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / DOMINIC CHAVIZ

Susan and Frank Ronne of Duxbury can control most of their home's functions with these keyboards.